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ABSTRACT

Undergraduate student teachers (n=25), alternative certification candidates (n=20), and graduate interns (n=30) were found to be similar in background, admissions data, grade-point average, and perceptions of their competencies in various academic subjects. When identifying sources of stress, alternative candidates were closer to undergraduates in their high concern for personal relationships and academic activities. Interns felt greater stress in time management, the future, and finances. In perceptions of themselves as teachers, interns maintained a consistent profile in self-esteem from the point preceding field experiences to an on-the-job followup a year later. The alternative group and the undergraduates experienced a significant downward shift in self-esteem within the same time frame. Interns received the highest performance ratings from principals and teachers--and the alternative group, the lowest--on communication skills, instructional skills, interpersonal skills, and the ability to establish a positive learning environment. Discussion of these results centers upon their relevance to the educational reform movements in the present decade. (Author/JD)

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CORRELATES OF SELF-ATTRIBUTION AND COMPETENCY OF LIBERAL ARTS GRADUATES IN TEACHER-TRAINING PROGRAMS

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Abstract

CORRELATES OF SELF-ATTRIBUTION AND COMPETENCY

OF LIBERAL ARTS GRADUATES IN

TEACHER-TRAINING PROGRAMS

Undergraduate student teachers, alternative certification candidates, and graduate interns were found to be similar in background, admissions data, grade-point average, and perceptions of their competencies in various academic subjects.

When identifying sources of stress, alternative candidates were closer to undergraduates in their high concern for personal relationships and academic activities. Interns felt greater stress in time management, the future, and finances.

In perceptions of themselves as teachers, interns maintained a consistent profile in self-esteem from the point preceding field experiences to an on-the-job followup a year later. The alternative group and the undergraduates experienced a significant downward shift in self-esteem within the same time frame.

Interns received the highest performance ratings from principals and teachers--and the alternative group, the lowest--on communication skills, instructional skills, interpersonal skills, and the ability to establish a positive learning environment.

Discussion of these results centers upon their relevance to the educational reform movements in the present decade.

CORRELATES OF SELF-ATTRIBUTION AND COMPETENCY OF LIBERAL ARTS GRADUATES IN TEACHER-TRAINING PROGRAMS

Introduction

We are told that this is a nation at risk--that we are losing our competitive advantage in world markets--that we are sacrificing our technological edge with mediocrity in science and mathematics. These are judgment calls, of course, but few would argue against the position that our perceptions shape our actions.

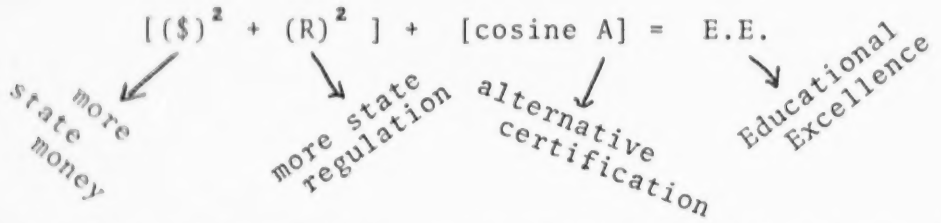
Our rush to judgment is easily matched by our rush to action. Across the country state boards of education have presided over the process of reform, increasing bureaucratic centralization and emphasizing standardization and uniformity. They have stiffened accreditation and certification requirements, expanding their regulatory powers and focusing on reforms which can be quantified, measured, and enforced (Doyle & Hartle, 1985). Many of these boards have wrested control over the training of teachers from the universities, forcing them to submit to ever more stringent requirements while granting to themselves the proprietary interest of alternative training by reverting to the 19th century custom which permitted teachers to learn on the job (Butts & Cremin, 1953). Such alternative routes to the profession of teaching usually relax

the requirements for certification, allowing individuals to enter the classroom with less preparation and less exposure to the reality of American classrooms.

No state in the union uses any justification for eliminating standards for entrance into the practice of medicine or law; yet, most states provide "ways a person may acquire a teaching credential through some short-cut strategy . . . or allow substandard routes to standard credentials" (Watts, 1986, p. 27). If pedagogical preparation is considered to be unnecessary for the profession of teaching, then we should cease accrediting teacher-training programs in the universities and return the primary responsibility for preparing future teachers to the school districts, as was the case over 150 years ago. If the formal training programs at the universities are preventing academically outstanding people from entering the profession of teaching, then we should simply examine future candidates in terms of some achievement test in their undergraduate major and send them off to the classrooms across the land. We should establish them in some form of apprenticeship arrangement, identify a mentoring teacher, and wish them well. Would the nation still be at risk?

If the Education establishment in state regulatory agencies continues to create policies which will yield a paper trail of number-crunching--e.g., number of minutes students spent in school during the day and academic year, number of weekly assignments completed out of school, number of students passing the Advanced Placement Test, number of teachers documenting their

request for merit pay--in order to justify the millions of dollars of increases in state educational expenditures voted by their partners in the state legislatures, the more elusive will school reform be, both in appearance and reality. The implied formula for success is simplistic, at best:



Real reform will continue to be elusive unless and until the public comes to terms with the adverse working conditions and the lack of psychic rewards that drive away 40% of all new teachers within three years of graduation from college (Schlecty & Vance, 1983) or, as Shanker (1987) expresses it, 1.1 million teachers by the early 1990's. It is further predicted that those who gain accelerated entry into classroom teaching through alternative certification programs will have even more difficulties because of less preparation and less readiness (Huling-Austin, 1988), and a greater likelihood of being assigned to the most difficult teaching situations. "Those schools that face the most adversity need committed and qualified teachers most, but they are also the least likely to get them" or to hold them (Timar & Kirp, 1988, p. 6). And--those who are the most academically talented are most likely to experience the greatest tests of their sense of competence and idealism and will probably leave the field of education in the greatest numbers (Goodlad, 1983; Schlecty & Vance, 1983).

Armstrong (1984) discovered that beginning teachers were overwhelmed by the disparity between their university-arranged experiences and the real world of the public school classroom. They were unprepared for the stress of children with special needs, classroom management, time management, evaluation and assessment of students, nonexistent teaching materials and supplies, excessive administrative requirements, poor parental support, town finance boards, setting up a classroom for the first time, new policies and regulations; and, most of all, the emotional draining which intrudes into their awareness almost every day when they leave the school building (Veenman, 1984). "It is a lonely time, an emotionally draining time, a frustrating experience" (Houston & Felder, 1982, p. 457). Why would anyone think that no exposure to the knowledge base in education, no prior field experiences under supervision, no training in pedagogical skills, and no reflection about the variety of teaching approaches observed and tried out--typically the case with those in alternative certification routes--would result in educational reform and excellence?

Perhaps the candidates for the alternative programs are sufficiently different from those in university teacher-training programs as to warrant some optimism about their capability to learn the art and science of teaching on the job and their staying power in the profession. Such was the springboard for the present research study.

Background Data

Most alternative certification programs draw older candidates with baccalaureate degrees in liberal arts and sciences majors, provide accelerated entry into classroom teaching, and result in these candidates being placed in teaching positions which are usually difficult to staff (Huling-Astin, 1988; Smith, Nystrand, Ruch, Gideonse, & Carlson, 1985).

On the competency issue, several studies have compared university students in teacher-training programs with candidates in alternative certification programs. National scores from 491 Education majors in six Pennsylvania universities and colleges were higher than the nationwide average in reading skills and study habits (Dupuis, 1984). In Illinois, teacher-education students indicated higher average ACT scores in English and mathematics than did non-Education graduates (Fisher, 1984). The Education graduates also demonstrated higher grade-point averages. In Kentucky, five institutions were surveyed; the grade-point averages of the Education students were the same or higher than non-Education majors in each of the five institutions (Nelli, 1981-1982). In a later study by Nelli (1988), a survey was conducted of 501 university students, indicating that Education majors received the same grades in their major courses and the same grade-point averages as did non-Education students. The results from a study by Nelson and Wood (1988) with Colorado university students in teacher-training programs in comparison to those in alternative programs showed no differences between the two groups in high school grade-point average

and high school rank; above-average scores of both groups on the SAT or ACT in comparison to college-bound students nationwide; cumulative grade-point averages for both groups at the level of "B" (3.10 and 3.00, respectively); high professional education grade-point averages for both groups (3.48 and 3.31, respectively); and scores for both groups above the state-mandated competency test cut-off at the 75th percentile on the California Achievement Test. Competency in the classroom did, however, differentiate the groups in that success in teaching was more reliably predicted when the coursework of the training program related to the knowledge and skills required in teaching.

The present study compared three groups: (1) Undergraduate student teachers; (2) alternative certification route candidates; and (3) graduate students in a one-year internship with background in a variety of liberal arts and sciences majors. Individuals from these three groups obtained teaching positions in New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. No significant differences were found in grade-point averages (all groups were higher than 3.00). They were compared on self-perceptions in the different academic areas and self concept as a teacher, sources of stress, and performance ratings by principals and experienced teachers. No differences were found at any time among the three groups in the scores of Self Concept as a Person. The details of this study are now set forth.

The Research Data

In Group I were 25 undergraduate student teachers. Group II had 20 individuals with baccalaureate degrees in some liberal arts and sciences major and were enrolled in alternative certification programs in collaboration with participating school districts. Group III included 30 graduate students also with baccalaureate degrees in the arts and sciences but were enrolled in a certification track at the university--a fifth-year program --with a full-year, paid internship in a local school district while taking certification courses in the evenings and on weekends. These Interns are based at a single school building and provide paraprofessional duties every day--substitute teaching, tutoring, small-group instruction, team-teaching, curriculum planning, assessing students, monitoring student progress, supervision in special units (music room, library, computer center, science laboratory, etc.), group discussion, directing extra-curricular activities, and conducting ethnographic research.

Training of the Interns consists of strategies, skills, and classroom activities in all the disciplines, and basic information about the functioning of contemporary schools. Continuing workshops and seminars throughout the year enable the Interns to discuss their observations, reflect on their own teaching and role-playing as well as similar activities of other Interns, provide information about school board policies, and share results of research they have undertaken at their placements. Interns learn their craft by watching a variety

of teachers, by trying out their techniques, and by experimenting with their own approaches in various settings, with a great variety of student ability and interest, and in the various disciplines besides their own specialty. They are called upon to substitute in any of the disciplines. University supervisors visit their Interns several times throughout each semester, holding periodic conferences with them and with their placement coordinators. The purpose of this specially designed internship is the gradual induction of the students to the profession of teaching while enrolled in a pre-service certification track at the university, without the problems of single-focused student teaching (e.g., Evertson et al., 1985; Griffin et al., 1985; Peck & Tucker, 1973).

Instruments. The groups were administered seven scales from The Affective Perception Inventory/College Level (Soares & Soares, 1986) for assessing academic self-perceptions:

(a) Student Self
(b) English Perceptions
(c) Mathematics Perceptions
(d) Science Perceptions
(e) Social Studies Perceptions
(f) Perceptions in the Arts
(g) Humanities Perceptions

API/C

The Sources of Stress Scale (S.O.S.S.) was administered to determine whether there are differences among the groups in the areas of concern and anxiety to them (Soares, Soares, & Ward, 1986):

(a) Personal Relationships
(b) Academic Activities
(c) Changes

(d) Finances
(e) Time Management
(f) The Future
(g) Field Experiences (in Education)
(h) The Self

The third assessment included the Self Concept Scale from the Adult Forms of the Self-Perception Inventory (SPI) and two scales from the Teacher Forms of the SPI: Self Concept as a Teacher and Ideal Concept as a Teacher (Soares & Soares, 1985); distributed at four different points of the study's time frame: (1) At the beginning before field experiences were experienced; (2) about six weeks into the field experience; (3) after the field experience was concluded, about four months after the onset; and (4) in January as an on-the-job follow-up.

The fourth and final assessment was taken near the end of their field experience in the form of performance ratings by school principals and experienced teachers. Judgments were obtained in several dimensions: Knowledge of subject, Communication Skills, Instructional Skills, Establishment of a Positive Learning Environment, Assessment and Evaluation, Interpersonal Skills, and Professional Attitudes.

The first assessment on academic self-perceptions is summarized in Table 1, Table 2, and Figure 1.

The second assessment on the sources of stress is addressed in Figure 2.

The third assessment on self-ratings as a teacher is summarized in Table 3.

The fourth assessment on performance ratings is found in Table 4.

Analysis

[1] Academic Self-Perceptions.

The intercorrelation matrix of all seven academic self scales from The Affective Perception Inventory/College Level (API/C) is noted in Table 1. In line with the standardization data, the three groups factored on two major clusters: The first containing English, Mathematics, and Science perceptions and the second on Social Studies, Arts, and Humanities perceptions. When analyzing the three groups separately, convergence on the three scales in each cluster was consistent, but discriminant validity was low--indicating little differentiation of the three groups on academic self-perceptions.

Table 2 indicates the comparative data of the three groups on the API scales. The scores were submitted to analysis of variance, with statistical significance shown only on the Social Studies Perceptions scale. The undergraduate student teachers were significantly lower than the Alternative group and the Interns. This scale also tended toward greater homogeneity of responses. Even though the other comparisons were not significant, a fairly consistent pattern of mean scores was demonstrated, with Interns having the highest scores, undergraduates the lowest scores, and the alternative candidates falling generally inbetween.

The profiles of these three academic self-perceptions are noted in Figure 1--clearly, a very similar pattern in how the three groups see themselves in each of the academic areas, including the general student self.

[2] Stressors.

In order to identify the areas of concern for the three groups, The Sources of Stress Scale (S.O.S.S.) was administered. The results are shown in Figure 2. It should be noted that a second group of Interns was included in this analysis to determine whether participation in the program might have changed their objects of anxiety. The profiles were similar for these two groups of Interns, with the exception of the Time Management scale. Although time management is still a high source of stress, continuing Interns tend to see this problem as more manageable than do beginning Interns. Besides Time Management, both Intern groups indicated their highest concerns on Finances and the Future.

The undergraduate student teachers and the alternative certification group also demonstrated a similar pattern in their stress profiles. They are both much more concerned about personal relationships and academic activities, but less concerned about time management, the future, and field experiences. Where the undergraduate and alternative groups diverge is on Finances (since the Alternative is being paid a beginning teacher's salary while learning on the job) and on Self (a high point of stress for the undergraduate group).

Perceived stress can be targeted to life events or to the present environmental field. Since the Interns are currently concerned about areas which are ultimately more controllable--or they could dissipate--while the concerns of the undergraduates and the alternative group are more ambiguous and less easily

defined--that is, personal relationships, changes, and academic activities, it is possible that their first job without supervision or mentoring will provoke a great deal more stress as they confront the dissimilarities with their present situation.

[3] Role Perceptions.

Three scales from The Self-Perception Inventory (SPI) were used with the three groups, and they were administered at four different points: (1) Before beginning the field experience, (2) six weeks into the field experience, (3) after the field experience was concluded, and (4) in January the following year while the individuals were in their first full-time position. No differences among the three groups were yielded at any of the four administration points for either the Self-Concept-as-a-Person scale or Ideal-Concept-as-a-Teacher scale. Therefore, only the Self-Concept-as-a-Teacher scale is discussed further. The summary of that analysis is noted in Table 3.

No statistical significance was found among the groups on the baseline point or on either of the two mid-points in the time frame. Significance occurred only in the January follow-up with Interns demonstrating a higher self concept in the role of a teacher than either the undergraduate student teachers or the alternative certification candidates.

The graduate Interns stayed fairly constant throughout the time frame of the study, but the other two groups showed a marked shift from their baseline scores to the follow-up scores at the end of the study, with the alternative group demonstrating the greater decrease over the undergraduates.

[4] Performance Ratings.

Table 4 contains the comparative data of the performance ratings of the three groups by school principals and experienced teachers. Four of the seven scale items indicated statistical significance. Principals rated Interns higher on performance than the other two groups on Communication Skills and Interpersonal Skills, and higher than the Alternative group on Establishing a Positive Learning Environment. The teachers rated the Interns higher in performance than the other two groups on Interpersonal Skills and higher than the Alternative Group only on the scales of Communication Skills, Instructional Skills, and Establishing a Positive Learning Environment.

All four scales demonstrating higher performance ratings for the Interns are those which require more time and experience to cultivate. In two years a follow-up study should be conducted to determine whether the apparent superiority of the Interns during thier training is maintained after they have been in a full-time teaching position.

Summary

No differences were found among undergraduate student teachers, alternative certification candidates, and graduate interns in the academic areas of competency which they attribute to themselves (except for Social Studies), and in their self concepts as people. The Alternative group tended to be closer to the Undergraduates in areas of concern which translate into sources of stress than the graduate Interns

in being high on personal relationships, academic activities, and changes while showing considerably less concern about the areas of time management, the future, and finances--which are the main sources of stress for the graduate Interns.

No significant differences were found in the quality-point averages, with all groups demonstrating a "B" average, slightly above 3.00.

In their self concepts as a teacher, demonstrated the largest downward shift from the pre-field experience point to the January follow-up, with the inbetween shifts showing decreases but not statistical significance. Undergraduates also noted a significant decrease between the beginning and ending points. The Interns were able to maintain their self-pictures as teachers throughout all the points of assessment.

The Alternative candidates received generally the lowest performance ratings from principals and teachers on communication skills, instructional skills, interpersonal skills, and the ability to establish a positive learning environment.

Although the above results may be somewhat limited in generalizability and more research must be conducted, early indicators show the possibility of risk in the alternative certification route to the professional integrity of teaching, insufficiency of the traditional student teaching program, and the promise of an internship program for improving the training and the competencies of future educators.

Discussion

True educational reform cannot come from external reward systems, even if the controls carry powerful incentives as traveling companions (Cross, 1984). Sizer (1984) concurs: "Excellent people have self-confidence and self-esteem, and expect reasonable autonomy" (p. 196). But in his study of America's schools, he discovered a serious lack of local autonomy. He draws the analogy to the field of law and wonders how effective attorneys would be if they were given rules for conducting a case in court, if they were told how much time to spend on each case, if they were given manuals on how to address the jury. Alternative certification candidates often depend upon the standardization of teaching which is suggested to them by their mentoring teacher because they have no other model to follow (Beyer, 1984).

> The purpose or outcome of the apprenticeship model is to ensure that the apprentice teacher models the master, . . . satisfies the master that, according to some local standard, he or she is fit to teach (Cruickshank & Armaline, 1986, pp.35-36).

Other authors warn that education is not simply the transfer of information from teacher to student; computer data-bases can do that job much more quickly, with more depth and breadth. "A teacher must aspire to be much more than a talking textbook, more than a mere functionary who implements standardized tests and mandated syllabi. Teaching should offer an illumination of reality which helps all of us grasp the social limits that constrain us" (Shor, 1986, p. 40).

Long ago Dewey (1904) warned about apprenticeship experiences in that the apprentice is likely to imitate the master rather than reflect on the practices observed. The newcomers must become cognizant of the knowledge base in the field and appreciate the role of research (Busching & Rowls, 1988). They need time to observe, ponder, explore, investigate, and experiment, as well as the opportunities to compare and match the best of what they find to their own abilities. These discoveries should take place while they are appreciating the beauty of their profession and learning the wisdom of practice.

Prospective candidates for the profession of education must attend to the "happenings of educational life . . . so that perceptions can be refined," . . . integrated, and appraised (Eisner, 1985, p. 221). Alternative candidates are too hurried and too harried to appreciate the magic of learning. As was noted in the present study, those on the alternative route to teacher certification are grappling with the basic problem of their own survival and cannot even begin to help their students to reach to a level beyond a learner's survival. In contrast, the internship program herein described seems to provide a viable "alternative" for developing the professional edge in those wishing to become teachers.

If learning could become an objective in and of itself, the noblest challenge would have become a reality, and the most lasting reform would have been instituted.

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TABLE 1

INTERCORRELATION MATRIX

OF

ACADEMIC SELF-PERCEPTIONS

	STUDENT SELF (S.S.)	ENGLISH (ENG.)	MATH.	SCIENCE (SCI.)	SOCIAL STUDIES (SOC.STS.)	ARTS	HUMANITIES (HUMAN.)
S.S.	1.00	.67	.61	.60	.45	.41	.42
ENG.		1.00	.49	.45	.31	.27	.40
MATH.			1.00	.68	.37	.29	.32
SCI.				1.00	.38	.28	.34
SOC.STS.					1.00	.46	.49
ARTS						1.00	.53
HUMAN.							1.00

SALIENT CLUSTERS:

(A) ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE

(B) SOCIAL STUDIES, ARTS, HUMANITIES

TABLE 2

ACADEMIC SELF-PERCEPTIONS

(MEANS/STANDARD DEVIATIONS)

GROUP	STUDENT SELF	ENGLISH	MATH.	SCIENCE	SOCIAL STUDIES	ARTS	HUMANITIES
(1) UNDERGRADS. STUDENT TEACHERS	38.97 12.31	25.80 10.14	12.79 9.33	19.88 7.20	19.11 * 8.65	19.60 12.17	20.29 10.58
(2) ALTERN. CERT. CANDIDATES	42.97 15.22	26.98 9.74	13.51 10.55	20.17 9.10	30.33 * 7.02	18.75 12.36	21.16 9.81
(3) GRADUATE INTERNS	45.24 13.67	28.60 8.33	14.12 11.17	21.48 10.83	35.40 * 5.12	19.84 12.67	21.88 8.33

SIG. DIFFER.
$p < .05$

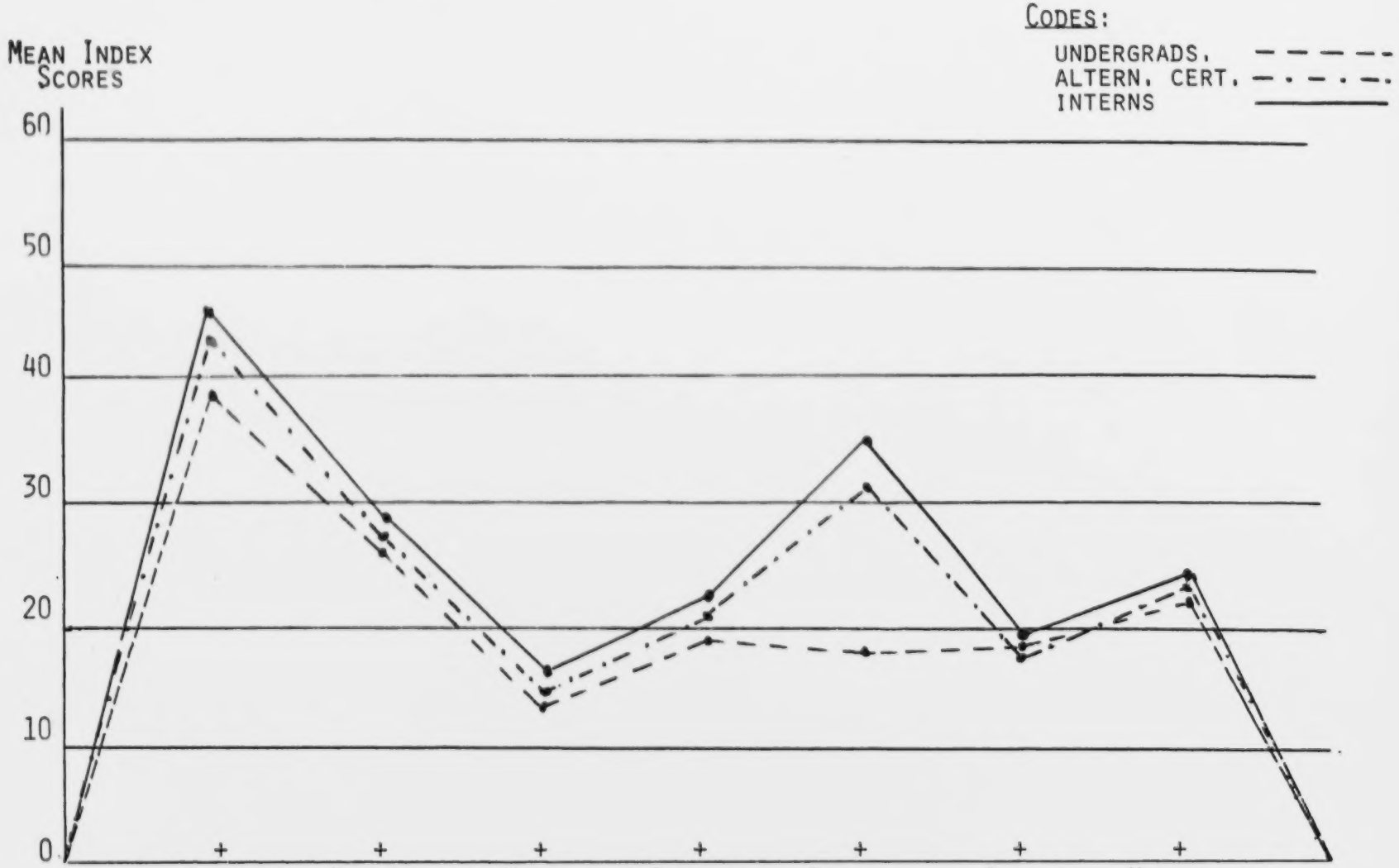
(1)*(2)
(1)*(3)

Maximum Standardized Score	60	50	50	50	50	50	50

N = 75

FIGURE 1

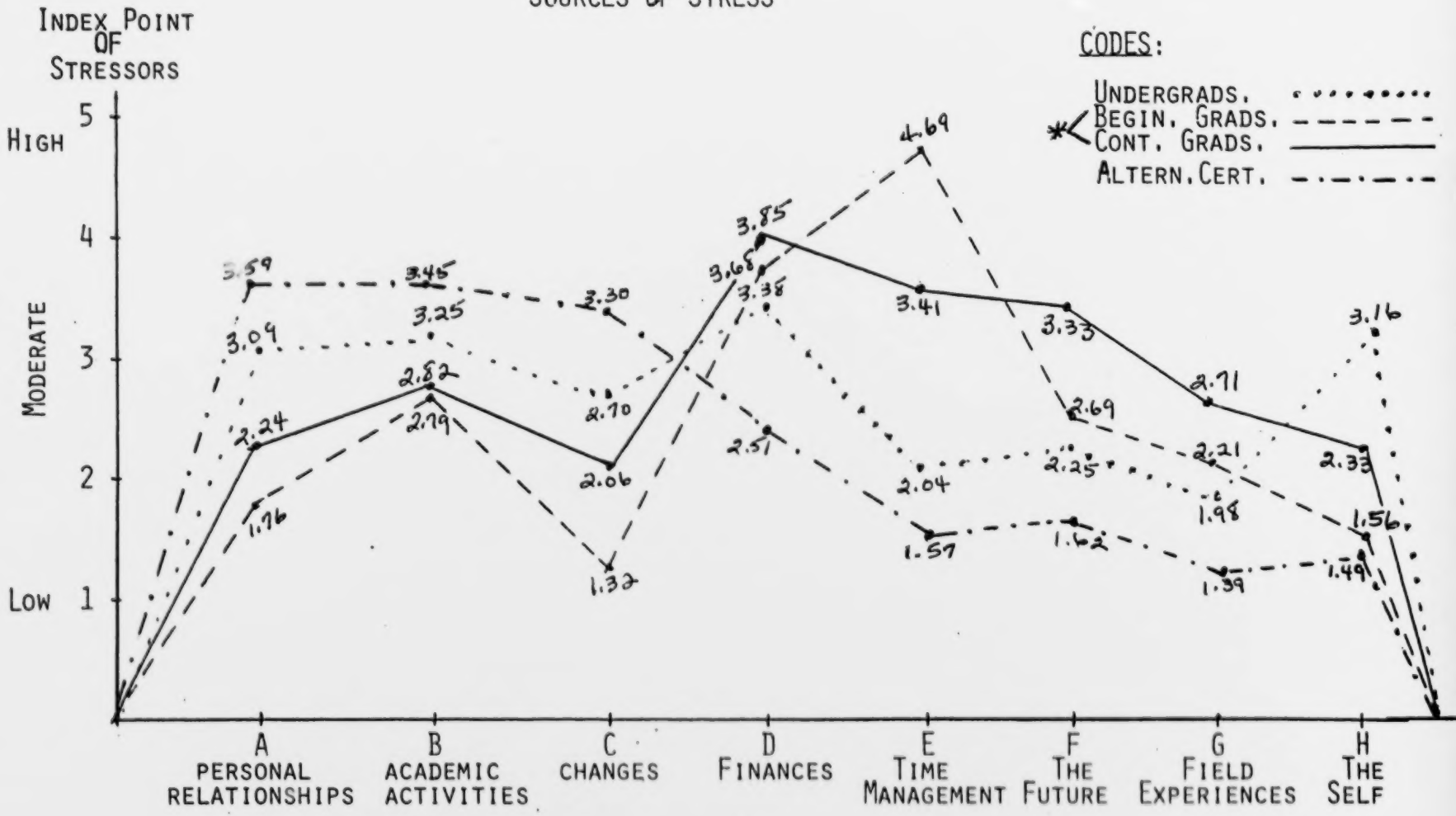
ACADEMIC SELF-PROFILE



STANDARDIZED MAXIMUM SCORE	60	50	50	50	50	50	50

FIGURE 2

SOURCES OF STRESS



COMPARISONS OF STUDENT GROUPS IN TEACHER-TRAINING

* INTERNS

TABLE 3

SELF-RATINGS AS A TEACHER

(MEANS/STANDARD DEVIATIONS)

GROUP	TIME POINTS			
	YEAR 1-BASELINE PRE-FIELD EXPERIENCE (a)	YEAR 1-6 WEEKS MID-FIELD EXPERIENCE (b)	YEAR 1 -4 MONTHS POST FIELD EXPERIENCE (c)	YEAR 2-JANUARY ON-THE-JOB FOLLOW-UP (d)
(1) UNDERGRADS. STUDENT TEACHERS	39.36 14.80	40.21 15.01	37.73 14.50	30.00 13.09 *
(2) ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION CANDIDATES	43.58 17.71	39.82 15.98	37.25 16.11	31.12 * 15.73 *
(3) GRADUATE INTERNS	38.63 18.46	35.20 12.15	41.17 13.09	38.84 11.90

(NOTE: Maximum standardized score on the above-referenced scale--Self Concept/Teacher--is 72.)

* SIGNIFICANT CHANGES: (1) (a) to (d)

(2) (a) to (d)

* SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES: (1)d & (3)d

(2)d & (3)d

* $p < .05$

N = 75

Table 4

Comparisons of Performance Ratings

ITEM	Undergrad. Stud. Teas. (1)	Altern. Cert.Cands. (2)	Grad. Interns (3)	* Sig.
1. Knowledge of Subject				
Principals	1.3	1.7	2.0	-
Teachers	1.8	1.3	1.9	-
2. Communication Skills				
Principals	1.7	1.2	2.5	(1)&(3) (2)&(3)
Teachers	2.0	1.4	2.3	(2)&(3)
3. Instructional Skills				
Principals	1.8	1.7	2.4	-
Teachers	2.0	1.4	2.2	(2)&(3)
4. Estab. Pos. Learn. Environ.				
Principals	1.8	1.3	2.1	(2)&(3)
Teachers	1.9	1.1	1.9	(2)&(3)
5. Assessment & Evaluation				
Principals	1.7	1.4	1.8	-
Teachers	1.5	1.2	1.6	-
6. Interpersonal Skills				
Principals	1.7	1.6	2.6	(1)&(3) (2)&(3)
Teachers	1.6	1.1	2.5	(1)&(3) (2)&(3)
7. Professional Attitudes				
Principals	2.3	2.3	2.4	-
Teachers	2.3	2.0	2.3	-

*All significant comparisons reached the .05 level.

NOTE: The mean ratings were obtained on the following scale:
EXCELLENT = 3 points SATISFACTORY = 2 pts. UNSATISFACTORY = 1 pt.